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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Thursday, January 4, 1945

QUESTION BOX:
How Simplify Housework?
What's a Process Chart?

ANSWERS from home management specialists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

It's time, once again, for our question box of the air.

We hear a lot about magic gadgets that are to make housework easy after the war. But if I'm to judge from the letters in my mail box today, some of you don't want to wait until a magic gadget can do the work for you. Instead you'd like to simplify some of those household jobs right now. And gain the benefits in 1945.

One homemaker writes - "My two little daughters and I have come to live with my mother and father while my husband is overseas. Coming back home from a small and conveniently arranged new house, I find there's a lot more work to do in mother's old fashioned two-story house. It takes us all day to get the upstairs and downstairs cleaned. We're never caught up with our laundry. The children's toys seem scattered one end of the place to the other. And both mother and I are worn out, trying to watch the children and keep our housework done. We never have time for anything away from home. Can you give us some suggestions for streamlining these household jobs?"

Yes, I have some hints on simplifying housework. These suggestions come from home management specialists of the United States Department of Agriculture. And here's what they say.

First, why don't you arrange a play pen and a low cupboard for toys in the kitchen. Then you can keep an eye on the little girls while you're fixing the meals and washing the dishes. It'll save you time too, if you take time to teach them to put their toys in the cupboard when they get through playing.

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As for the cleaning, why don't you divide the work. You take the upstairs. Your mother do the downstairs. Keep a set of cleaning supplies on both floors. It doesn't mean a big investment and it will save you countless steps.

How about leaving out some of the household jobs that you ordinarily do. Drying the dishes, for example? What would happen if you didn't dry them? If you stacked them on a rack, rinsed them with hot water and left them to dry themselves. You'd save time and energy. Save dish towels too.

And here's another time saver. Do you feel that you simply must iron the sheets and towels. Many a busy mother smooths and folds them and puts them away these days, unironed.

Plan one dish meals and cook the main course - baked beans or a souffle or macaroni with cheese - in a dish that you can serve it in. That's one way to save on dish washing.

These are just some of the ways you can streamline your house work. It takes planning to save time and to save steps, but you'll find that planning pays. The profits are in added leisure and less fatigue.

This next question is on the same topic - simplifying housework. A homemaker wants to know - what's a process chart? How does it make housework easier, she asks.

I answer this by asking you a question. Have you ever thought about all the things you do when you perform some household job - say when you iron a shirt? Well, if you'd make a list of every move you make when you iron a shirt - better still, if you'd have a friend and neighbor watch you iron the shirt and make a list of everything you have to do, you'd have a process chart. That's the name home management specialists give to a list of the different movements you make in pe performing any household job.

To make any household job easier, they say you need to make a process chart first. Then you need to study your chart and ask yourself some questions about

it. See how you can improve the job. See if you can make it easier. Perhaps you can change the order of work. Perhaps you can leave out some steps.

Perhaps you could make the job easier if you kept all your supplies within easy reach. If you didn't have to take a step or two to get to the laundry basket. You might find you were less tired at the end of the ironing, if you sat down while you ironed. You might need to adjust your ironing board to a different height. You might make better time with your ironing if you could use both hands....one to smooth the garment and one to iron it. You might find it possible to combine two jobs. To iron two things at the same time.

Those are some of the ways you might improve your work so that it would take less time and leave you less tired. So that's how a process chart helps you with your housework. It makes you aware of wasted motion. It makes you realize when you're walking around in circles and not getting much done.

When you've found a better way of doing the work, make yourself an improved household chart. Then practice performing the tasks the new way until you get in the habit of doing them that way.

We don't have time to do our household work the hard way, these days. Don't have the energy to spare either. We owe it to ourselves and to our community to get our house work done as easily and as well as we possibly can. So if you're finding that some of your work is taking a long time and leaving you worn from doing it, make a process chart. Study the way you do your work. It'll be much easier for you, if you can make every motion count.

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